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Remarks:
Amended claims in accordance with Rule 137(2) EPC.

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(54) **Sliding plate with reinforced slot**

(57) A bone plate that may be used to maintain relative position of two pieces of fractured bone, for example, a fractured jaw bone. The bone plate has a slot and holes. The holes are surrounded by walls and the slot is also surrounded by walls. The thickness of walls surrounding the slot at their maximum is greater than the thickness of walls surrounding the holes. Often the nature of the fracture may require bending of the plate for implanting it as desired by the surgeon. Because walls of the slot are designed to be strong, the slot is not deformed when the plate is bent.

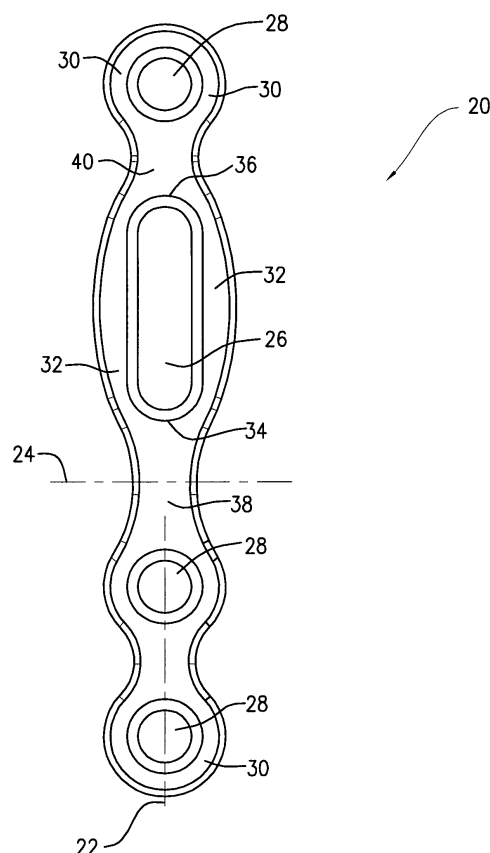


FIG. 1

Description

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates to a bone plate, in particular, a bone plate for maintaining relative position of two pieces of fractured jaw bone.

[0002] Bone plates are widely used to maintain fractured bones in a fixed relative position. Figure 3 shows a conventional bone plate 100. Conventional bone plate 100 has a slot 102 and holes 104. Holes 104 are surrounded by walls 106 and slot 102 is surrounded by walls 108. The diameter of holes 104 and the width of slot 102 are same. Since the maximum width of the bone plate measured at holes 104 and slot 102 are equal, the thickness of walls 106 and 108 are same. Often the nature and location of the fractures, and the bone contour at the fracture site, may require bending of plate 100 for implanting it as desired by the surgeon. Plate 100 may be bent side to side in the plane of plate 100 and additionally may also be bent transverse to the plane of plate 100. In conventional plates 100, when the plate is bent, as shown in Figure 4, slot 102 can deform. Often when slot 102 deforms, the opening of slot 102 is, at portions, larger than at other portions and often larger than the head of the fastener used in slot 102. Therefore, there is a need for an improved bone plate wherein the slot would not get deformed when it is necessary to bend the plate.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0003] The present invention provides a bone plate that may be used to maintain relative position of two pieces of fractured bone, for example, a fractured jaw bone. The bone plate of present invention has a slot and holes. The holes are surrounded by walls and the slot is also surrounded by walls. The thickness of walls surrounding the slot at their maximum is greater than the thickness of walls surrounding the holes.

[0004] In use, the bone plate is first attached to a first fragment of fractured bone. Next, bone fragments are aligned and the other end of the bone plate is attached to second fragment. Since the attachment to the second fragment is via a screw inserted in the slot, the first fragment and the second fragment can be moved relative to each other. Once the first fragment and the second fragment are brought in relative positions desired by the surgeon, additional screw are inserted into second fragment and first fragment. Often the nature of the fracture may require bending of the plate for implanting it as desired by the surgeon. The plate of present invention has an elongated neck portion where the plate may be bent. Because walls of the slot are designed to be strong, the slot is not deformed when the plate is bent.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0005]

Figure 1 shows a plan view of an embodiment of a bone plate of present invention.

Figure 2 shows a pictorial view of a bone plate implanted on a jaw bone.

Figure 3 shows a conventional bone plate.

Figure 4 shows a conventional plate that has been bent.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0006] Figure 1 shows a bone plate 20. Bone plate 20 may be used to maintain relative position of two pieces of fractured bone, for example, a fractured jaw bone. Bone plate 20 is an elongate part made from bio-compatible material. Bone plate 20 has a longitudinal axis 22 and a transverse axis 24. Bone plate 20 has a slot 26 and holes 28. Holes 28 may be located on one side or both side of slot 26. Bone plate 20 may have one or more holes 28. The Holes 28 are surrounded by walls 30 and slot 26 is surrounded by walls 32. The outer contour of plate 20 around holes 28 may be circular and the outer contour of plate 20 around slot 28 may be arcuate. The outer contours of the plate may take other shapes. In the embodiment of Figure 1 having the outer contour around holes 28 circular and the outer contour around slot 26 arcuate, the thickness of the walls 30 are measured radially from the centre of the corresponding holes 28 and the thickness of the walls 32 are measured parallel to transverse axis 24. The thicknesses of walls 30 are constant whereas the thicknesses of the walls 32 vary at different points along the length of slot 26 though in a preferred embodiment it is not necessary that the walls 32 be different in thickness at every point. In a preferred embodiment, the max thickness is at the central region of the slot 26. The thickness of walls 32 at their maximum is greater than the thickness of walls 30. In another embodiment, wall 32 may have a constant thickness that is greater than walls 30. Slot 26 has a first end 34 and a second end 36. A hole 28 that is located near the first end 34 is connected to the first end 34 via a neck 38. A hole 28 that is located near the second end 36 is connected to the second end 34 via a neck 40. The width of bone plate 20 is measured parallel to the transverse axis 24 and is narrower in the neck area.

[0007] Figure 2 shows a bone plate 20 attached to first fragment 52 and second fragment 54 of a fractured jaw bone 50. In use, bone plate 20 may be first attached to first fragment 52 of fractured bone 50 by placing one hole 28 of bone plate 20 on the first fragment 52 and inserting a screw 56 through hole 28 and into bone 50. Next, bone fragments 52 and 54 may be aligned and the other end of bone plate 20 may be attached to second fragment 54 by inserting screw 58 through slot 26 and in second fragment 54 of bone 50. Since screw 58 is inserted in a slot, it gives the surgeon flexibility to reduce the fracture, i.e.,

align first fragment 52 and the second fragment 54 after screw 58 is inserted. Once first fragment 52 and the second fragment 54 are brought in relative positions desired by the surgeon, additional screw 60 and thereafter screw 62 are inserted via respective holes 28 into second fragment 54 and first fragment 52 respectively. Often the nature and location of the fracture, and the contour of the bone site, may require bending of plate 20 for implanting it as desired by the surgeon. Plate 20 has an elongated neck portion 64 where the plate may be bent. Plate 20 may be bent in the plane of plate 20 or transverse to the plane of plate 20. Plate 20 may also be bent in any other manner deemed necessary by the surgeon. The walls 32 of slot 26 are designed to withstand the bending forces which might be translated to this region as the elongated neck portion 64 is bent. Thus, slot 26 is not deformed when plate 20 is bent intraoperatively to be contoured to the bone at or adjacent a fracture site.

[0008] Although the invention herein has been described with reference to particular embodiments, it is to be understood that these embodiments are merely illustrative of the principles and applications of the present invention. It is therefore to be understood that numerous modifications may be made to the illustrative embodiments and that other arrangements may be devised without departing from the spirit and scope of the present invention as defined by the appended claims.

Claims

1. A bone plate comprising:

an elongate plate;
a slot formed in the elongate plate, the slot having a first wall forming an outer periphery of the slot;
a first annular hole formed in the plate, the hole having a second wall forming the outer periphery of the hole; and
a neck portion located between the slot and the first annular hole, the neck portion being bendable in the plane of the plate and transverse to the plane of the plate,

wherein at least a portion of the first wall is thicker than the second wall.

2. The bone plate of claim 1, wherein the bone plate is straight and the slot has a first end and a second end, and a second annular hole is formed in the plate, the second hole being located on the first end side of the slot and the first hole being located on the second end side of the slot.

3. The bone plate of one of claims 1 or 2, wherein a first distance between the slot and the second hole is less than a second distance between the slot and

the first hole.

4. The bone plate of one of claims 2 or 3, further comprising: a second neck portion located between the slot and the second annular hole, the second neck portion being shorter than the neck portion.

5. The bone plate of one of claims 1 to 4, wherein the first wall varies in thickness along a length of the slot and is thickest in a central region of the slot.

6. A bone plate for maintaining relative position of two pieces of fractured bone, the bone plate comprising:

an elongate plate having a longitudinal axis and a transverse axis;

a slot formed in the elongate plate, a length of the slot being parallel to the longitudinal axis of the plate, a width of the slot being parallel to the transverse axis, the slot being surrounded by a slot wall, the slot having a first end and a second end;

a first hole formed in the plate, the first hole being on the first end side of the slot and being surrounded by a first wall;

a first neck portion connecting the first hole to the first end of the slot, the neck portion being bendable in the plane of the plate and transverse to the plane of the plate ;

a second hole formed in the plate, the second hole being on the second end side of the slot and being surrounded by a second wall; and

a second neck portion connecting the second hole to the second end of the slot,

wherein a thickness of the slot wall measured in a direction parallel to the transverse axis varies in the longitudinal direction, and a maximum thickness of the slot wall is greater than a maximum thickness of the first wall or the second wall.

7. The bone plate of claim 6, wherein the slot wall comprises:

a first side, the first side being straight; and
a second side, the second side being generally in the shape of an arc, the first side and the second side having the maximum thickness between them.

8. The bone plate of one of claims 6 and 7, wherein the maximum thickness of the slot wall is in the middle of the slot.

9. The bone plate of one of claims 6 to 8, further comprising:

a third hole formed in the plate, the third hole being located on the first end side of the slot or the second end side of the slot.

10. The bone plate of one of claims 6 to 9, wherein the first neck portion and second neck portion have different lengths. 5
11. A bone plate comprising;
a plate; 10
a slot formed in the plate, the slot having a first end and a second end;
a first hole formed in the first end of the plate;
a second hole formed in the second end of the plate;
a first neck connecting the first hole to the first end; 15
and
a second neck connecting the second hole to the second end, wherein
the first neck is longer than the second neck. 20
12. The bone plate of claim 11, wherein the plate is bendable at the first neck. 25
13. The bone plate of one of claims 11 and 12, wherein the plate is bendable at the second neck. 25
14. The bone plate of one of claims 11 to 13, wherein the plate is bendable in the plane of the plate and transverse to the plane of the plate. 30
15. The bone plate of one of claims 11 to 14, wherein the plate is bendable in the plane of the plate and transverse to the plane of the plate. 35
16. The bone plate of claim 11, further comprising: 35
a first wall formed around the first hole;
a second wall formed around the second hole;
a slot wall formed around the slot, wherein at least a portion of the slot wall has a thickness greater than a thickness of the first wall and a thickness of the second wall. 40
17. The bone plate of claim 16, wherein the thickness of the slot wall varies along a length of the slot. 45
18. The bone plate of one of claims 16 and 18, wherein the thickness of the slot wall is maximum in the middle of the slot. 50

Amended claims in accordance with Rule 137(2) EPC.

1. A bone plate (20) for maintaining relative position of two pieces of fractured bone, the bone plate comprising: 55

an elongate plate having a longitudinal axis (22) and a transverse axis (24); a slot (26) formed in the elongate plate, a length of the slot being parallel to the longitudinal axis of the plate, a width of the slot being parallel to the transverse axis, the slot having a first end (34) and a second end (36) in the direction of the longitudinal axis, and side walls (32) in the direction of the transverse axis, wherein each side wall (32) comprises an inner side, the inner side being straight; and an outer side, the outer side being generally in the shape of an arc, wherein the maximum thickness of each side wall (32) is between the inner side and the outer side,
a first annular hole (28) formed in the plate, the first annular hole being on the first end side (34) of the slot (26) and being surrounded by a first hole wall (30); and
a first neck portion (38) connecting the first annular hole (28) to the first end (34) of the slot (26), the neck portion being bendable in the plane of the plate and transverse to the plane of the plate,

wherein the maximum thickness of each side wall (32) is greater than a thickness of the first hole wall (30) in the direction of the transverse axis.

2. The bone plate (20) of claim 1, wherein the bone plate is straight, the plate further comprises a second annular hole (28), the second hole being located on the second end side (36) of the slot, and a second neck portion (40) located between the slot and the second annular hole.

3. The bone plate (20) of claim 2, wherein the second hole (28) is surrounded by a second hole wall (30); and the maximum thickness of each side wall (32) is greater than a thickness of the second hole wall (30) in the direction of the transverse axis.

4. The bone plate (20) of claim 2, wherein the first neck portion (38) and second neck portion (40) have different lengths.

5. The bone plate (20) of claim 2, wherein the second neck portion (40) being shorter than the first neck portion (38).

6. The bone plate (20) of one of claims 1 to 5, wherein the each side wall (32) is thickest in a central region of the slot in the direction of the longitudinal axis.

7. The bone plate (20) of one of claims 1 to 6, further comprising:

a third hole (28) formed in the plate, the third hole being located on the first end side (34) of

the slot or the second end side (36) of the slot.

8. The bone plate (20) of claim 1, wherein the plate is bendable at the first neck.

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9. The bone plate (20) of claim 2, wherein the plate is bendable at the second neck.

10. The bone plate (20) of one of claims 1 to 2, wherein the plate is bendable in the plane of the plate and transverse to the plane of the plate.

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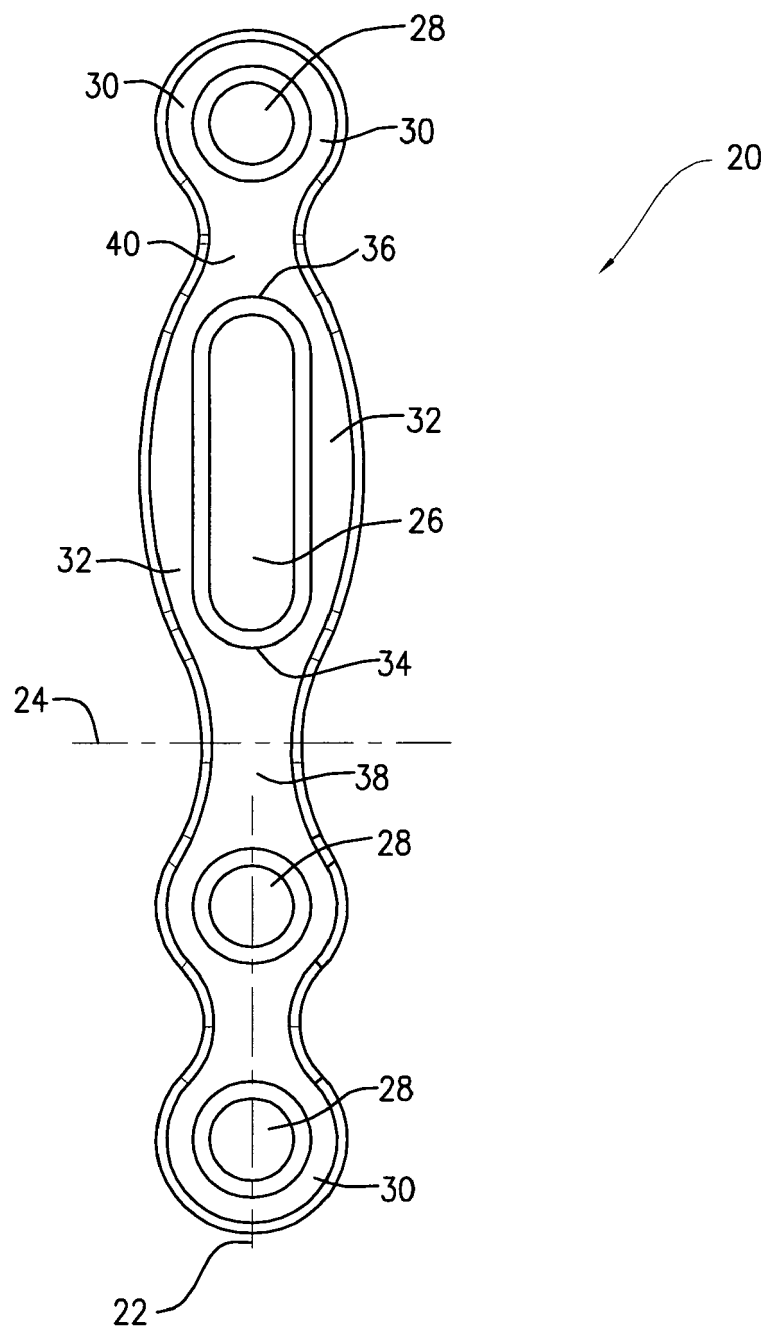


FIG. 1

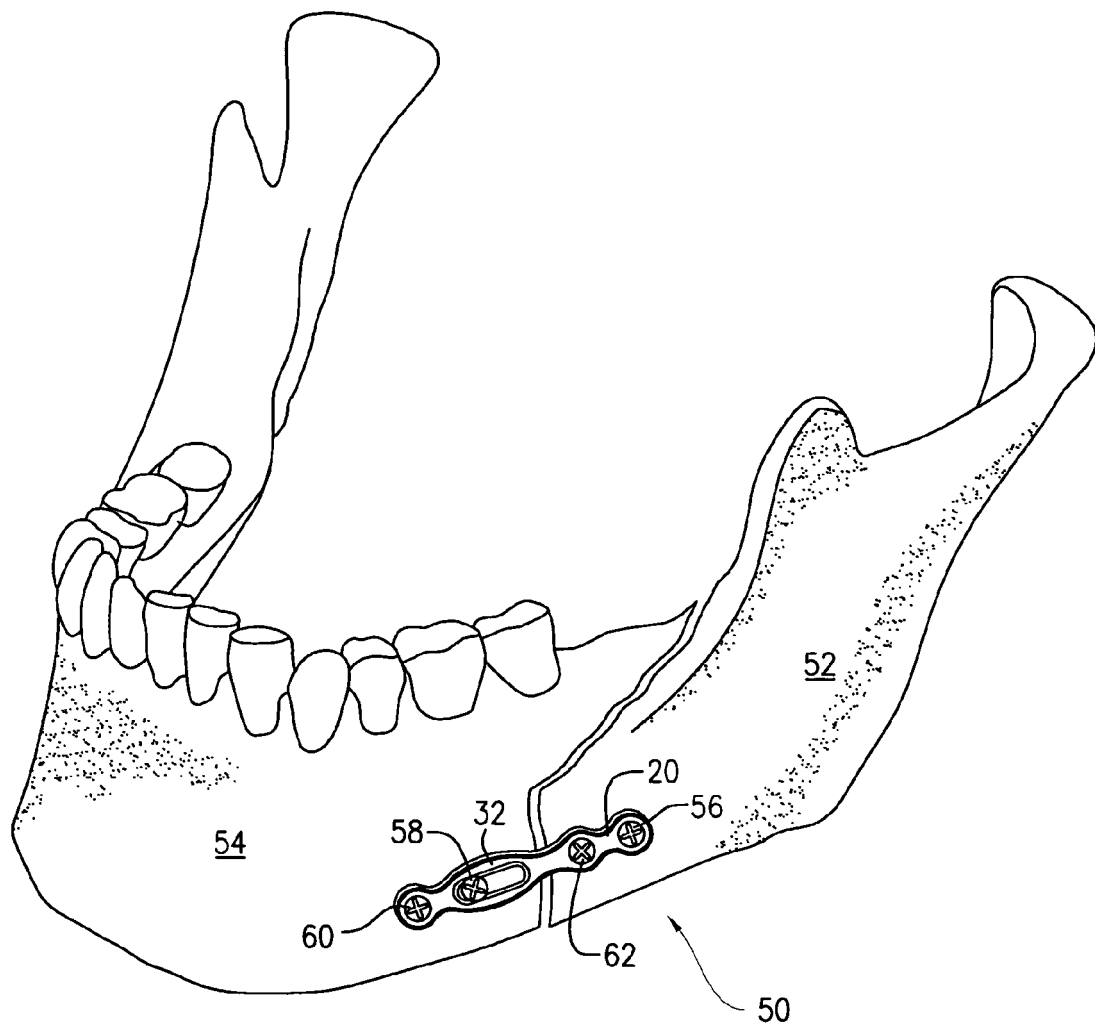


FIG. 2

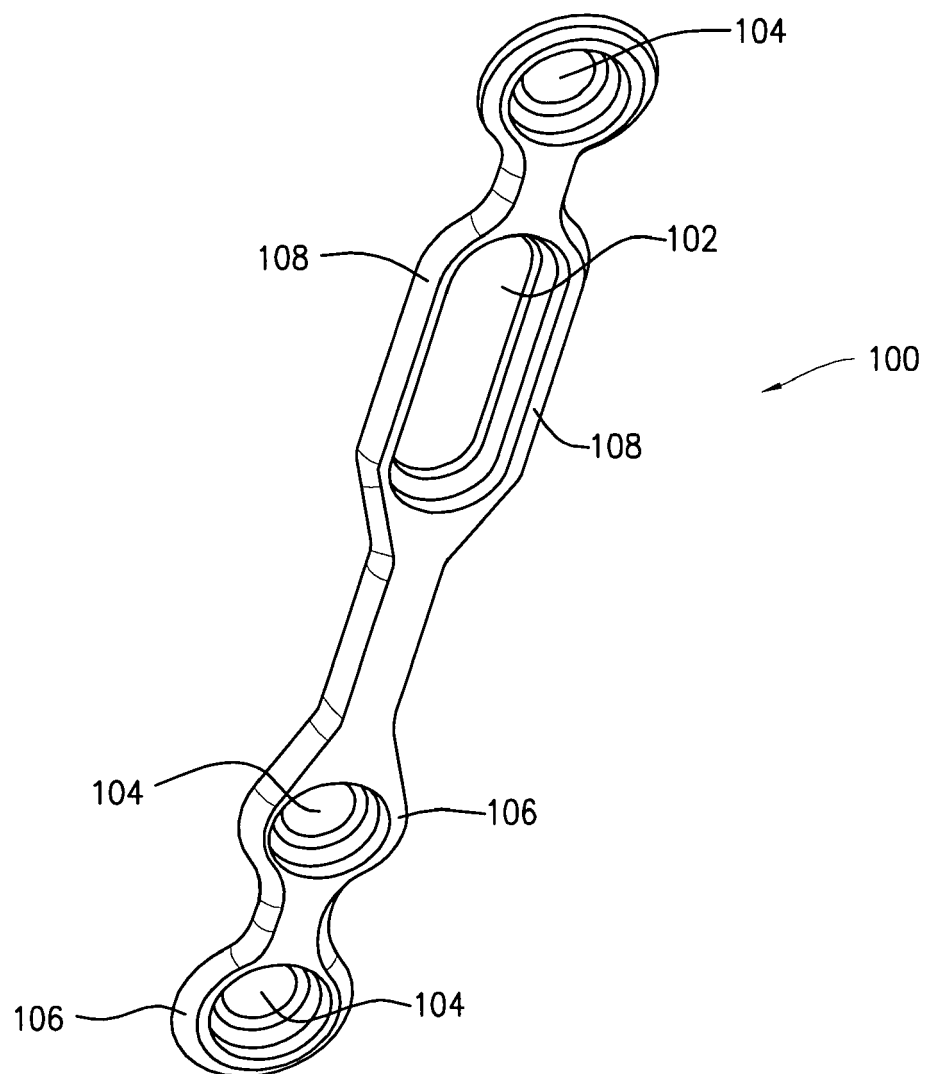


FIG. 3

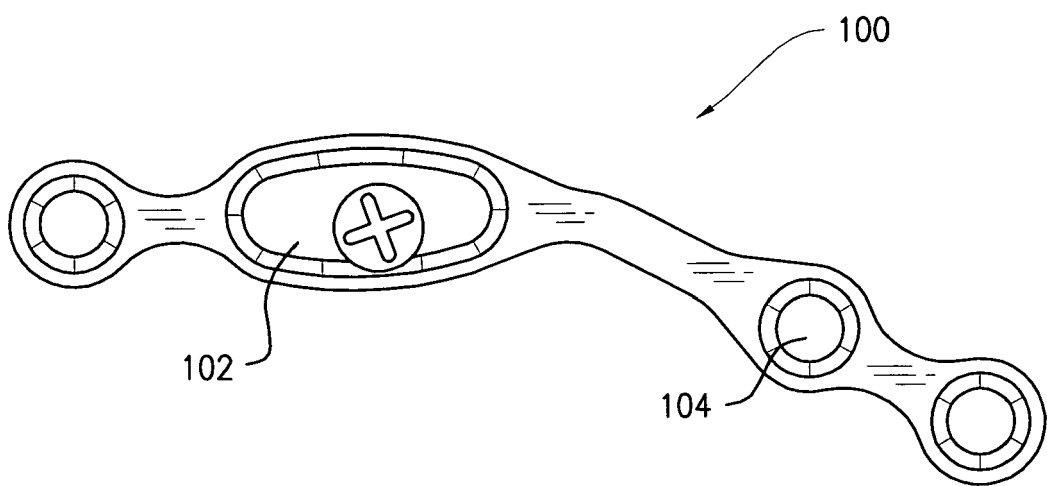


FIG. 4



European Patent
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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 07 00 9158

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Place of search Berlin		Date of completion of the search 29 October 2007	Examiner Ducreau, Francis
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**ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT
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